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Editorial: Parties look past voters

If you've been following the presidential election even a little bit, you should already be feeling the groundswell of growing panic emanating from the establishments of both the Democratic and Republican parties.

For the Republicans, Donald Trump, the reality TV star candidate once considered a joke, has now taken a commanding lead in the delegate count. After Super Tuesday, no one in the GOP head office is laughing any longer. As of Friday, Trump had 329 delegates, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz had 231, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio had 110, Ohio Gov. John Kasich had 25 and Dr. Ben Carson had 8. If any one candidate amasses 1,237 by the convention, they win the nomination outright. But, the thinking goes, if Trump's foes can deny him this number, they could then set the stage for a contested convention in which a more acceptable candidate could be recruited.

For the Democrats, the thumb on the scale would be less about the pledged delegates, but something called superdelegates. Even though 2,383 total delegates are needed to secure the Democratic nomination, there are 712 superdelegates who can support anyone they choose and change their decision at any time leading up to the convention.

So, even though former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is only leading independent Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders by a 608 to 413 pledged delegate margin, once you add in the announced intentions of the superdelegates, those numbers swing wildly in her favor for a total of 1,061 to 431. (Clinton should be well familiar with this process as the support of these superdelegates was one of the deciding factors in handing the nomination to then-Sen. Barack Obama when she ran against him in 2008.)

More than any other candidates on offer this cycle, Trump and Sanders have bucked the system and run remarkably successful outsider, insurgent campaigns. If we reach the conventions and either party wishes to retain any shred of legitimacy with these voters in their own parties, they will back away slowly from any plans that smack of disenfranchisement.

If these elites had wanted to stop to these upstarts, they should have struck back in legitimate ways much earlier in the campaigns. Otherwise, what was all this for?